

English Translation of the Inaugural Address, Jalsa Salana 26th December 1982

The year 1982 has a distinctive position in the annals of Ahmadiyyat, as it was in 1882 that the Promised Messiah received the first revelation about his being the appointed one. Thus a century has elapsed since his claim of being the appointed one. Besides, it is in this very year that Allah the Exalted has empowered the Ahmadiyya *Jamaat* to renew its pledge of *Baiat* of allegiance. The beginning of each pledge is linked with hopes as well as painful tales and narrations of sacrifices. It is the duty of the, living nations to perpetuate the recounting of these stories of grief. It is said in a Persian couplet:

If you wish to keep ever fresh and bright the memory of the pains of the heart
Then you should continue recounting the old tales of yore.

When I pondered over the beginning of Ahmadiyyat in this regard, my mind turned to the beginning of the effulgent light of Islam. As the very fountain of this light, which gushed forth for the entire universe, had its source in the person of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him. All other stories have sprung from it like the branches of a tree that sprout from its trunk.

When I reflected on this aspect, I realized that the condition of the world at the time this light began to shine was strange indeed. On the one hand the human intellect was illumined to receive *light upon light*, and on the other, all talent for thinking was palsied, ideas corrupted, inclinations of heart overturned and actions spoiled. There did not remain a semblance of comparison between one and the other. This state of affairs turned out to be a complete and fitting commentary on the Quranic verse:

Surely We have created mankind in the best of creative plans.
Then We reverted him to *the state of* the lowest of the low.¹

Both these phenomena were distinctly seen in the days of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of God be on him. On one side was the *أَحْسَنَ تَقْوِيمٍ* (people of best capacities) and on the other were the scenes of *أَسْفَلَ سَوِيلِينَ* (people who were the lowest of the low).

I begin this discourse by referring to two concepts of cooperation. One is the kind of cooperation which the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of God be on him, was presenting in accordance with Divine revelation. The other was the idea of cooperation of the disbelievers of Mecca. Despite their sharing the same age and environment, breathing the same air and enjoying the same light, the difference in their ideas was so vast that one could do little but wonder.

The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of God be on him, announces:

Say ‘O People of the Book! Let us agree in a matter equal between us and you that we

¹ *The Holy Quran*. Al Tīn [The Fig]: 5, 6.

worship none other than Allah and that we ascribe no partner to Him and that some of us take not others for Lords beside Allah.’ But if they turn away then say ‘Bear witness that we have submitted.’²

The reformation of society and solution of the woes of the age could be achieved by upholding common values for the sake of which the differences should be set aside. The same one God in whom you believe is the one God towards whom I am calling you. Then I ask you to cooperate in matters of virtue and righteousness. No matter what your faith is, at least cooperate in goodness. Cooperation in virtue is the common value of the entire world.

In response to this appeal for cooperation, as is clear from the *Ahadith*, the disbelievers put forward a curious mode of cooperation. They asked for cooperation in divergent values rather than in common values, such as, we worship your God to some extent and you worship our gods for a while. You follow the truth a little while and also falsehood to some degree. These were the discordant announcements on cooperation which were simultaneously raised in Mecca. It was a strange scene of a paradoxical state of affairs where the clear majority of Arabia decided that they, because of their majority, will have the right to give a name to the religion of the followers of Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be on him. As far as Muhammad and his companions were concerned, they did not even have the right to name their own religion. They were persecuted for the ‘crime’ that they called themselves Muslims. And the persecutors named them Sabians. Thus when Abu Imama returned to his tribe after accepting Islam, the disbelievers proclaimed that he had become a Sabian. However, the Muslim minority, knowing as they did that the disbelievers did not like their claim to being Muslims, continued to declare that they were Muslims.

Hazrat ibn Umar relates that when his father, Hazrat Umar, became a Muslim, he selected a person from the Quraysh to announce his being a Muslim. The person announced that Umar ibn Khattab had become a Sabian. Hazrat Umar retorted saying that he had become a Muslim, whereupon the Quraysh rushed upon Hazrat Umar and beat him mercilessly.

Hazrat Abu Dharr Ghifri relates that when he came to Mecca, he asked with due caution a weak person where the man whom they called a Sabian lived. The person, pointing to him, began shouting: *Sabi, Sabi*. Thereupon the Meccans pelted him with stones, bricks, and whatever else they could get hold of, to such an extent that he lost consciousness.

The believers in Hazrat Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be on him, were even stopped from reciting *Kalima* (the credo of Islam). The Holy Quran has described it in this way:

When Allah the One is mentioned the hearts of those who believe not in the hereafter wince in aversion; but when those beside Him are mentioned suddenly they begin to rejoice.³

When Hazrat Zubayr ibn al-Awwam (Allah be pleased with him) professed belief, his cruel uncle made a habit of wrapping him in a mat and forcing him to inhale smoke, asking him to recant the *Kalima*. But he never yielded, although he became unconscious under this

² *Quran*. Āl Imran [Family of Imran]: 65.

³ *Ibid*. Al Zumar [The Throngs]: 46.

treatment.

Hazrat Khabbab was a slave of a lady and worked in her shop as a blacksmith. After he pronounced the truth, his mistress took to branding his body with red-hot iron from his furnace in order to make him recant. But she failed in her objective.

Hazrat Bilal was one of those oppressed who accepted Islam at its very inception, suffered various types of torture and was subjected to severe pressure to recant. Abu Jahl made a habit of placing him, face down, under the scorching sun, placing heavy stones on his back and asking him to renounce Muhammad and the Lord of Muhammad. But he would continue saying *Ahad, Ahad* - God is One. Likewise, Umayya ibn Khalf used to throw him on his back, put hot stones on his chest and threaten to keep him in that condition until he died or recanted. But, despite this torture, he continued saying: *Ahad, Ahad*.

Hazrat Ayesha relates that when Hazrat Abu Bakr accepted Islam, he began to lecture on Islam. The idolaters rushed upon him. One disbeliever beat him on the face with the edge of a shoe, threw him down on his back and trampled on him so severely that his features were disfigured and rendered unrecognizable. Some of his kin took him away and tried to revive him. Late in the afternoon when he (Hazrat Abu Bakr) regained consciousness, his first inquiry was how the Holy Prophet (peace was and blessings of God be on him) was. At this they started rebuking him and left him, remarking that his heart would never be devoid of Muhammad's love.

It was a time when a paradoxical state of affairs prevailed. On the one hand the reciters of *Kalima* proclaimed that they would undergo every sacrifice but will not recant, and on the other, the disbelievers asserted that they would rather accept every sacrifice than allow them to recite the *Kalima*.

The companions of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, were even forbidden to call the Adhan.⁴ Hazrat Urwa ibn Masud Saqafi expressed belief and sought permission to return to his tribe. At home, he got up at dawn and called Adhan in the yard of his house. A wretch heard the Adhan, lost his temper and martyred him with an arrow before he finished calling Adhan. The companions of the Holy Prophet were even stopped from worship. This has been related in *The Holy Quran* thus:

Hast thou seen him who forbids -
A votary when he prays?⁵

Hazrat ibn Abbas relates that one day when Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa, peace and blessings of God be on him, was in the posture of prostration, Abu Jahl put the bowels of a camel on his back. It was at this time that the above verse was revealed. Hazrat Abdullah ibn Masud relates that once when the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of God be on him, was in

⁴ The Islamic call to prayer, recited by a Muezzin at prescribed times of the day. [Translator].

⁵ *Quran*. Al Alaq [The Clot]: 10, 11.

prostration during his prayers, Uqba ibn Abi Muayt brought the bowels of a slaughtered camel and threw it on his back. It was so heavy that the Holy Prophet could not raise his head. His daughter, Hazrat Fatima (Allah be pleased with her) came and removed the weight from his back.

One day when the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of God be on him, was performing prayers, the same wretch Uqba ibn Abi Muayt threw a sheet of cloth around his neck and twisted it so hard that he was about to be strangled. Hazrat Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him) hearing the news came and rebuked the disbelievers.

The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of God be on him, and his servants were stopped even from constructing mosques or even having mosques in their own houses. An Arab had declared his protection to Hazrat Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him) and he was permitted to construct a mosque in the yard of his house. This has been mentioned in *The Holy Quran* as such:

For who is more unjust than those who prohibit the name of Allah being glorified in Allah's temples and seeks to bring about their ruin? It behoves not such to enter therein except in fear. For them is disgrace in this world and theirs shall be a great punishment in the next.⁶

In the early days, even the Takbir was not permitted.⁷ When the number of Muslims increased the performance of prayers was secretly started in the house of Hazrat Arqam, in the fourth year of Prophethood. It is narrated that when Hazrat Abu Bakr constructed a mosque in the yard of his house, he began to recite the Quran and observe his prayers there. This hurt the feelings of the disbelievers. The women and children of the idolaters used to assemble and observe him praying and reciting. This too annoyed the Quraysh and they took his protector to task. He strongly restrained Hazrat Abu Bakr from this act. It is strange that things which should open up the hearts and be a source of consolation were arousing imaginary feelings of hurt in the disbelievers. *The Holy Quran* mentions it in the following manner:

For when our clear signs are recited unto them, thou wilt notice signs of hostility on the faces of those who disbelieve. They would well-nigh assault those who recite Our signs to them. Say: shall I tell you of something worse than that? It is the Fire. Allah has promised it to those who disbelieve. What a dismal end.⁸

One day, as Hazrat Abdullah ibn Masud (Allah be pleased with him) was reciting *The Holy Quran* in a loud voice in the streets of Mecca, the idolaters started striking him on his face and lips. When his companions expressed their sympathy to him, he replied that if they so wished, he would repeat the same actions the next day.

⁶ *Quran*. Al Baqarah [The Heifer]: 115.

⁷ The name for the Arabic proclamation *Allaho Akbar* meaning 'Allah is the Greatest'. [Translator].

⁸ *Quran*. Al Hajj [The Pilgrimage]: 73.

Hazrat Ayesha also used to narrate similar incidents of hurt feelings among the disbelievers and the latter's persecution of Muslims in consequence. When Hazrat Abu Bakr recited *The Holy Quran* in the yard of his house and people's feelings began to be bruised, the person who had given protection to Abu Bakr came to him and said: O Abu Bakr! I did not provide you protection to injure the feelings of my people. Hazrat Abu Bakr replied that he did not injure anyone; he only wished to pray in his own way. Nevertheless, if he wished to rescind his protection, he could do so. Thereupon the person rescinded his protection of Hazrat Abu Bakr.

While this was the attitude of the antagonists of Islam, it is interesting to note the reaction of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of God be on him, towards them. His reaction was to display tolerance towards even his bitterest enemies. Once, while a funeral procession of a Jew passed by, he stood up. When the companions expressed wonder at this, he remarked that tolerance and good behaviour were obligatory. In order to avoid hurting the feelings of the Jews, he asked that he be not given preference over Moses (peace be upon him). Then he said he was not to be given preference over Jonah.

Once a delegation of sixty Christians came from Najran and he permitted them to conduct their worship in his own mosque. Again, a delegation of idolaters came from Taif and he allowed them to pitch their tents in the yard of Masjid Nabwi. The companions asked: Are the idolaters not unclean? The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of God be on him, replied that the uncleanness of idolatry did not desecrate the land of Allah.

He was stopped from the Hajj too.⁹ *The Holy Quran* mentions this in the following verses:

As to those who disbelieve and debar people from the way of Allah and from the Sacred Mosque which We have appointed equally for all men, be they dwellers therein or visitors from the desert; and whoso seeks wrongfully to deviate therein from the right path shall We cause to taste of a grievous punishment.¹⁰

And what would shield them from punishment now when they hinder men from the Sacred Mosque and they are not its true guardians? Its true guardians are only those who are righteous, but most of them know not.¹¹

The difference in ideologies was emphasized so vehemently that Muslims were not allowed to even reside in the houses they built themselves and they were forced to migrate.

Hazrat Abdullah Zul Bajadayn was an orphan brought up under the care of his uncle. When he accepted Islam, his uncle drove him out of his house in such a miserable condition that not a single piece of garment was left on his body. This oppression went so far that even the

⁹ Annual pilgrimage to the Holy city of Mecca, one of the five pillars of Islam to be completed at least once in a lifetime. [Translator].

¹⁰ *Quran*. Al Hajj: 26.

¹¹ Ibid. Al Anfal [The Booty]: 35.

wives of Muslims were not allowed to stay with them. Hazrat Umm Salama tried to migrate with her husband but she was forcibly prevented from doing so. Then her son was separated from her. Besides they tried to effect divorces under duress.

They refused even to concede the right that the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, be addressed by his own name. They had named him *Muzammam*. When all these atrocities did not stop the Muslims from professing Islam, they detained all the Muslims in the valley of Abu Talib for three years. There, providing food was out of the question, even water which was of God was not allowed to reach them.

The story of these atrocities is very long indeed. However, the comments of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of God be on him, on all these cruelties are revealing. When he was asked to pray against these people, he was outraged and said: There had been people before you whose flesh was pulled out of their bodies with spikes of iron but they never expressed a word expressive of disgust. It is the work of God which will certainly be accomplished.

While conversing about the beginnings of Islam, we must invoke the blessings of Allah upon the Holy Prophet, who was the greatest benefactor. What a magnificent position he and his servants are favoured with. I assure you that the world can change. The heaven and earth can pass away, but the decree of Allah can never change. The symbolic fire of Abu Lahb shall certainly be defeated by the Light of the Immaculate One. Neither any power, nor any stone, nor any mountain falling upon the chests can ever suppress the cry of Bilal. Neither any injury, nor any grief, nor any persecution can ever stop us from the expression of *La ilaha Ill-Allah* [There is no God but Allah] or from the expression of the truth of Muhammad the Messenger of Allah and all those who are with him. They are destined to prevail and not to be prevailed upon.

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